

United States Senate

November 12, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

I write to you regarding the departure of the Phoenix Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital Director RimaAnn Nelson, and the search for her replacement.

As you know Arizona is home to over 500,000 veterans, and only one-third seek care at one of the VA's facilities. Following the national wait time scandal of 2014 that started at the Phoenix VA, Congress passed multiple pieces of legislation, including the landmark MISSION Act of 2018. This has allowed veterans greater access and choice in their care.

The Phoenix VA also was the first in the nation to pilot and adopt the minute clinic program that allowed veterans to seek treatment of minor illnesses and injuries, rather than flood the VA's emergency rooms---which has drastically reduce wait times and access for veterans.

Additionally, the Phoenix VA is home to the "Be Connected" suicide prevention program for veterans across the state. This nationally recognized program has been credited as a model for community engagement and making resources available to veterans in need.

As you consider a suitable candidate for replacement, you should ensure that all of these successful programs remain a priority.

Lastly, I would also hope that this replacement has a track record of transparency and community engagement as frequent communication with Arizona's congressional delegation is necessary to achieve results.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on the ways we can support our country's veterans and ensure the highest quality care possible. Please make this a high priority and urgently fill this vacancy.

Sincerely,



Martha McSally
United States Senator